

## **Cabinet**

**5<sup>th</sup> March 2009**



## **Local Government Reorganisation**

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### **Background**

1. This report provides an update on the LGR programme.

### **Current Position**

2. A detailed report was prepared for the last County Council meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> February (a copy of which is attached at Appendix A). As a result there is not much to add to update Cabinet on the progress of the LGR programme.

### **HR**

3. The consultation with staff on the proposals for ring fencing and slot-ins at Tier 4 level commenced last week. This will end on the 12<sup>th</sup> March when shortlists will be finalised for the interviews to take place during the period Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> March through to Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> April. Some interviews however are to be delayed until later in April to allow the Heads of Service who are to be appointed following the external recruitment process an opportunity to be involved.
4. Within the next few weeks staff will be formally advised of which Service grouping they will be in from 1<sup>st</sup> April pending the full restructure to be undertaken after Vesting Day.

### **Day 1 Planning**

5. The 'rapid response' arrangements for the period after Vesting Day have now been finalised which will ensure immediate action can be put in place should there be any service or operational issues. This will be led by Terry Collins, Corporate Director Neighbourhood Services and managed through the LGR programme office. This should ensure any foreseen events can be dealt with quickly and service levels maintained during the changeover period.

### **Communication**

6. Early in March members will receive a detailed briefing note on arrangements for Vesting Day. This will include contact details for the new Council, key contacts for specific issues and arrangements for members support and facilities.

## **Members Seminars**

7. During March three seminars are planned for Members on the following dates:
  - 4<sup>th</sup> March – 12.30pm and 6.30pm
    - Economic development landscape present and future
  - 9<sup>th</sup> March - 12.30pm and 6.30pm
    - Constitution
  - 26<sup>th</sup> March – 12.30pm and 6.30pm
    - Day 1 arrangements
    - Member support
    - Service delivery
    - AAP update.
8. The seminar on the 26<sup>th</sup> March will cover the information supplied in the Members briefing note issued earlier in the month and provide details of any last minute changes being introduced.

## **Priorities**

9. The following critical decisions remain outstanding and are planned to be brought to Cabinet for agreement at the next meeting on the 19<sup>th</sup> March.
  - Fees and Charges
  - Corporate Plan
  - Corporate Enforcement Policy
  - Licensing Policies.

## **Recommendation**

10. Cabinet are asked to note this latest progress report on the LGR programme.

## Appendix A

### County Council

27<sup>th</sup> February 2009



### Local Government Reorganisation

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#### Background

1. This report provides an overview of progress to date on the LGR programme.

#### Senior Management Structure

2. In order to find permanent replacements for the vacant Heads of Service posts, an external advert has now been placed in a number of national and local media. This covered 5 of the 8 vacancies with the remaining 3 to be advertised in March.
3. Alongside this process a number of senior managers have submitted applications for ER/VR which have now been considered and agreed.

#### HR

4. The consultation on the next layer of management (Tier 4) is now complete. In total 104 jobs have been identified at this level and the consultation attracted over 400 responses. These have each been considered and changes made to either individual job descriptions or to the overall structure. A written response to staff and Members detailing the changes made and commenting on some of the key themes which were raised has been prepared and issued.

#### Communication

5. Work is progressing well on ensuring District offices and other assets are re-branded on or soon after Vesting Day. Thanks to the help and support of District officers plans are now agreed for how each location will be re-badged and in many locations it is also planned to put a 'banner' in the reception area before Vesting Day to advise citizens of the forthcoming changes. These banners will reinforce the position that for the majority of services these will be supplied or available exactly as now, a strategy which should minimise the risk of service breakdown.
6. Advertisements are also planned for newspapers and other media to ensure citizens are aware of the new arrangements from 1<sup>st</sup> April. In addition the last addition of Countywide, the County Council's magazine which will be distributed to every household in the County in March will contain an 8 page pull out on the new Council, including contact details for key services, and again clarifying that services will largely be available as before. The new Council will be marketed under tag line '*Altogether better*', demonstrating how collectively local government in County Durham will be better.

7. Following the Chief Executives latest round of visits to the District offices the new management team have also been busy visiting offices as part of the transitional planning in order to meet staff and answer any questions in the run up to Vesting Day.

### **Area Action Partnerships (AAP)**

8. With the County Council's Cabinet agreeing the AAP model, including the functionality and role, work is now progressing towards the establishment of the AAPs with the Local Strategic Partnerships making way for the new arrangements which will be launched in April.
9. The Area Action Partnerships will be launched in each of the 14 areas with a public event held between the 15<sup>th</sup> April and 13<sup>th</sup> May. The aim of the events will be to maximise publicity for the AAPs and encourage local people to get involved with their local AAP, either as a board member of part of the wider forum.
10. The launch events will be held in large capacity local venues with the aim of attracting an audience of 150-200 people.
11. Invitations to the event will be sent to the individuals and organisations that participated in the summer consultations. Additional publicity will be raised through the Countywide magazine and other partner newsletters, as well as partner websites.
12. The details of the events are given below:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Area</b>	<b>Venue</b>
Wed 15th April	Ferryhill and Chilton	Ferryhill Comprehensive
Thurs 16th April	Crook / Willington / Tow Law	Spectrum Leisure Centre
Mon 20th April	Weardale	Wolsingham School
Tues 21st April	Newton Aycliffe	Leisure Centre
Wed 22nd April	Teesdale	Teesdale School
Thurs 23rd April	Consett	Consett Civic Hall
Mon 27th April	Chester-le-Street	Civic Centre - Restaurant
Tues 28th April	Stanley	The Lamplight Centre
Wed 29th April	East Durham Rural	<i>to be confirmed</i>
Wed 6th May	Spennymoor	Leisure Centre
Thurs 7th May	Durham City	County Hall - The Durham Room
Mon 11th May	Easington	Shotton Hall
Tues 12th May	Bishop Auckland	Jubilee Fields, Sildon (Sports Hall)
Wed 13th May	Mid Durham Rural West	DCBC Sir Bobby Robson Centre

(Please note that some venues remain subject to confirmation.)

### **'Must haves'**

13. The critical day one projects are continuing to be finalised with Good progress being made. 28 projects are now complete and a further 34 projects nearing completion (i.e. over 75% complete). Some projects can't be completed until Vesting Day for legal reasons i.e. the new Constitution won't be approved until 1st April 09 and the change of name on the VOSA licence won't happen to the 1st April.

## Members Seminars

14. During March three seminars are planned for members to include information on the recent Credit Crunch, more details on the day 1 plans for the new Council and to provide Members with information on the content and key changes to the Constitution. The dates for these have been advertised.

## Priorities

15. The critical planning work for day one is now focussed on ensuring service delivery is maintained and staff across the County have the necessary clarity and support to fulfil their roles and responsibilities.
16. In the event of any unforeseen issues there will be a 'rapid response' process in place for the early days of the new Council to react quickly and effectively in the event that issues are experienced either with service delivery or in the core operating processes of the new Council. This will be led by a Corporate Director and will ensure action can be taken promptly to resolve any difficulties.

## Service Improvements

17. Whilst the focus has been on ensuring service delivery is maintained, a number of areas will see improvements on or soon after Vesting Day, these include:
  - A **single new telephone number** for customer access will be available from the 1st April, in addition to the existing numbers that people are currently used to. There will be a planned migration of existing telephone numbers to this 'golden number' through the transformational redesign of services following Vesting Day.
  - The new **Durham County Council website** will go live on Vesting Day. This has been developed using best practice from top performing public and private sector organisations, ([www.durham.gov.uk](http://www.durham.gov.uk)) and will be a key self service access point for customers for all of the council services, customers can currently access electronically. The website will be supported by an accurate and up to date A to Z of services which will be a 24 hour self service point of information for customers and all staff across the organisation
  - The new Council will commence **green waste collection** to 67,000 households from 14th April (Durham City and Sedgefield) and on 5th May (Chester-le Street, and Derwentside). This will nearly double the extent of green waste collection (currently 69,000 households) and mean that approximately 75% of all suitable households in the County have this service, with more to follow, subject to local composting capacity. This will improve composting performance by 4%, and is anticipated to be extremely popular with residents.
  - From Vesting Day all 10 public swimming pools will offer **free swimming** to anyone 18 years and under or over 60. The scheme is jointly funded by the Government and NHS County Durham and goes beyond what will be available in other parts of the country through the offer being extended to young people aged 17 and 18.
  - More **help for the homeless** - with the setting up of a Homeless Prevention Fund across the County aimed at preventing people from becoming homeless. Early advice and assistance will be provided as well as emergency professional advice where people have become homeless and need help.

- **Greater housing choice** from June with the launch of a countywide scheme which lets people choose from a broader range of available homes. It is hoped that as well as providing people with more choice the scheme will also make better use of the available accommodation and reduce the number of empty properties.

## **18. Recommendations**

- 19.** The County Council is asked to note the progress being made on the transition towards a new Council.